

Syllabus – USP 300 Intro to Urban Studies, Fall 2025

Instructor Information

Norene Hough (she/her/ they/ them)

norenehough@pdx.edu

Office Hours: Monday 1 – 3 pm in 370N, Urban Center or by appointment [Calendar](#)

Course Description

USP 300 is a 4-credit course (CRN: 13637) that introduces the interdisciplinary field of urban studies drawing on urban planning, economics, geography, sociology, politics and the humanities to provide basic concepts for understanding the urbanized world of the twenty-first century. This course discusses cities as economic, social, and political systems and ways in which people have thought about cities.

Learning Outcomes

- Pursue a metacognitive process to be a reflexive reader, thinker, and learner while monitoring one's own comprehension of text, self-assessing your own learning. Engage with your own complex learning style, education, identity, and biases and how it impacts your perspective to synthesize and process new information presented in academic context.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and variety of urban forms and structures; and explain how the idea of the city varies in different historical and comparative contexts.
- Describe the distinctive social, cultural, and spatial features of cities and illustrate their impacts on the urban experience; and develop an appreciation of the complexity of cities in form and function and the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to their investigation.
- Dissect the socio-structural power dynamics in researching/ studying cities as part of urban studies and how this process has contributed/ continues to perpetuate institutional, systemic, and structural racism.
- Demonstrate familiarity with a multi-disciplinary approach to the city as an object of study; and apply concepts or methods from more than one social science or adjacent discipline to analyze an urban issue or problem.
- This is a UNST Cluster course – this means we integrate the 4 program learning goals from University Studies: [Communication; Inquiry & Critical Thinking; Diversity, Equity & Social Justice, and Ethics Agency & Community](#).

Class Materials

This class has no required texts to purchase. We will rely on articles, websites, and videos that will be posed to Canvas. We will use technology including (but not limited to) Canvas, email, Zoom, GIS StoryMaps, Websites and Google Suite. You are responsible for accessing these technologies multiple times per week. **You do need regular internet access and a computer/ laptop/ Chromebook for this class.** Reliance solely on a cellular connection and/or using a tablet will not be sufficient for the assignments in this course.

Class Format

The course is organized thematically. We will meet in person twice a week and then have additional materials for outside of class that will include: pre-recorded lectures; readings; videos; web based activities, and discussions. This course asks you to practice the skills used by urban scholars every day to study & better understand the city. Upper-division students are expected to be self-directed learners able to summarize and synthesize lectures, readings, media, and lead discussions.

Our class meets in person on Mondays & Wednesdays from 9 am – 10:40 am. During class we will be engaging in discussions & activities. It is vital that you are able to regularly attend. **It is not possible to pass this course if you do not have regular attendance.**

The materials for the course will be run through the class Canvas site and all materials will be posted to that site. It is important to let the instructor know if you are not able to access information or if you are having problems with the technology. You will be *required to interact with the Class Canvas site multiple times per week.*

In addition, we will be using StoryMaps through your pdx.edu on-line subscription – so you will need to have regular access to a computer (not tablet/ phone/ Chromebook) to use this product. You can do this entirely on campus, in the computer lab.

Expectations for Inclusivity:

Building an inclusive learning environment requires us to work together to listen (reading carefully and reflecting in the online environment), and make room for all to have a say (asking questions and interacting in an encouraging way); to support each other to find our voice; and to recognize and anticipate a wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, identities, and ways of being in the world.

We can all promote safe and inclusive learning by listening deeply (including reading carefully and reflecting) and being ready to learn from those around us. In an online learning environment, it is important to work to write clearly, thoughtfully, and respectfully (take your time and consider the impact of your words). Please learn and use the correct pronouns for your classmates, please do not make assumptions. I hope that we can begin from a place of mutual respect and gentle personalism – taking each other where we are at each day, offering the benefit of the doubt, and being aware that the workings of power and privilege impact different communities and individuals in different ways.

Assignments

The description below summarizes the grades and assignments for this course. Further guidance and detailed instructions about each assignment will be provided in each module and via Canvas. The class has a total of 1,000 possible points.

In- Class Tasks, Out of Class Activities & Participation

300 points

Participation in this course is key. Attendance will be taken and there will be Google Surveys, small in class activities, and some points will be assigned for tasks you will complete both in & outside of class.

Weekly Note-taking Activity/ Reading Processing Activity

300 points

To support the key class objective of learning to be a reflective learner, each week you will be responsible for completing and submitting a weekly Note-taking Activity Task. These tasks ask you to engage with reads & videos; think and process the information, and then create some set of notes/ study sheets that you can use in the future. Further directions will be given each week. There are 10 weeks and you are responsible for 10 Note-taking Activities (30 points each for 10 weeks for a total of 300 points.) These are due each week no later than midnight each Sunday.

City Exploration Project

400 points

Each student will investigate a different city and create a city presentation. This project will be broken up over the course of the term into small weekly assignments you are responsible for researching your city & adding to Presentation. Students will create a visual story; explore how cities vary across the US, and how to concisely present information in both visual & written formats. Tasks are assigned each week, there will be checks on your progress in weeks 3 & 6 with the final project due in week 10.

This class has no final exam.

Grading Policies

Grades in college are about more than just having completed the assignment or meeting the task. When I am grading work for this class, I am looking for evidence of your critical thinking and assignments that demonstrate creativity, original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented.

Final Grades – Grades in this course are determined by points. Your percentage is based on these points.

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
Percentage Cutoff/ based on points	94%	90%	87%	84%	80%	77%	74%	70%	67%	64%	60%	0%

No Incomplete grades (“I” grades) will not be offered in USP 300. If you are experiencing difficulty, please seek help from the instructor or other campus supports as soon as possible. For more information, please consult the university “I-to-F” grade policy.

Grading: Grades are determined entirely based on points assigned. The points for each assignment will be detailed on both the syllabus and each assignment. I use the standard university grading scale as detailed above. All grades are kept up to date in Canvas. The instructor provides feedback on larger assignments. If you have any questions about a grade, at any time, please email the instructor. It is your responsibility to check your grades on Canvas and ensure that you are making progress.

Late Work Policies: Classes move very fast & 10 weeks is very quick when you get behind. Late work makes it hard to keep up and engage with your peers. As a result, late work will be accepted for up to 1 week after the due date with a 10% penalty. After one week, I will not accept late work in this course.

I know many unexpected things may happen, if you are behind in the course or something happens that puts you behind/ you need an extension, please contact the instructor immediately. I can be very flexible but I need to know what is going on so that I can offer you that flexibility. Extensions require emailing the instructor and creating a new work plan.

P/NP option: At this time the option for Pass/ No Pass is NOT being offered for this course for this term. You have to receive a letter grade upon the completion of this class. Please know that if you get behind, I am willing to work with you. However, this requires us to meet and create a plan.

Class Schedule

Week/ Date Module/ Topic	Tasks (Materials are due on Mondays, Wednesdays & Sundays)	Deliverables
Week 1 Sept 29 – Oct 5 Introduction & Thinking about Cities + Understanding Cities/ Ways of Seeing	→ Into Google Survey → Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ What is a City? (4 min) ◆ <u>Urban Geography: A Critical Introduction</u> Ch 1 (17 pages) ◆ How big can cities get? (10 min 55 sec) ◆ Why are People Moving to Cities (11 min 15 sec) ◆ Human Terrain: Visualizing the World's Population (10 minute/ 8 slide visual website) → Week 1 Note-taking Activity: Questions/ Your Own Style due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: Pick a City & Get Started	Wednesday: ● Intro Survey ● Bring Personal Object to Share Sunday: ● Week 1 Note-taking Activity ● Pick a City for Your Project & Get Started
Week 2 Oct 6 – Oct 12 Cities as Object of Study: Space & Place	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ How are Cities Organized? (11 min 52 sec) ◆ Space & Status by Daphne Spain (10 pages) ◆ Grand Reductions: 10 Diagrams That Changed City Planning (22 pages) ◆ Why Cities are Where They Are (14 min) ◆ Here Are the Real Boundaries of American Metropolises, Decided by Algorithm (2 pages) ◆ Population Density 101: A Visual Guide to Suburbs and Skyscrapers (10 min) → Week 2 Note-taking Activity: Main idea + Visuals & Descriptions → City Exploration Project Task: Map & Description	Sunday: ● Week 2 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project

Class Schedule, page 2

Week/ Date Module/ Topic	Tasks (Materials are due on Wednesday & Sundays)	Deliverables
Week 3 Oct 13 – Oct 19 Selected History of Cities: Settler Colonialism & Industrialization	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ Land Acknowledgment & Western Lens (1 page) ◆ Why did humans invent cities? (10 min) ◆ The Dirt of Cities by Illich (3 pages) ◆ Coal, Steam and the Industrial Revolution: Crash Course World History #32 (11 min) ◆ Growth, Cities, and Immigration (12 min 45 sec) ◆ How US corporations poisoned this Indigenous community by Vox (17 min) ◆ The Centrifugal 20th Century (4 min) ◆ 2020 Census shows U.S. population (6 pages) → Week 3 Note-taking Activity: KWL & Internet Visuals → City Exploration Project Task: History Slideshow & Turn in Project	Sunday: • Week 3 Note-taking Activity • Make Progress on Your City Project • 1st Draft of your City Project Turned In
Week 4 Oct 20 – Oct 26 Considering Urban & Suburban Spaces	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ The New Urban Sociology excerpt from Ch. 6 (8 pages) ◆ What is a Suburb? (9 min) ◆ An Inversion of Nature: How AC Created the Modern City (5 pages) ◆ The Disturbing History of the Suburbs (6 min 19 sec) ◆ Urban Geography: Why do we Live Where we Do? (8 min 45 sec) ◆ Excerpts from What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities (25 pages) ◆ What is the biggest threat facing cities? (1 page) ◆ Suburbia is Subsidized (10 min) ◆ Population Density 101: A Visual Guide to Suburbs and Skyscrapers (10 min) → Week 4 Note-taking Activity: Mind mapping or Charting Method → City Exploration Project Task: Landmark Map	Sunday: • Week 4 Note-taking Activity • Make Progress on Your City Project

Class Schedule, page 3

Week/ Date Module/ Topic	Tasks (Materials are due on Wednesday & Sundays)	Deliverables
Week 5 Oct 27 – Nov 2 Mental Health in Urban Spaces	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ Excerpts from: The Urban Brian: Mental Health and the Vital City by Nikolas Rose & Des Fitzgerald ◆ Global Stratification & Poverty: Crash Course Sociology #27 (10 min 19 sec) ◆ The study that shows life is a lot more unequal than you (probably) think. (3 min) → Week 5 Note-taking Activity: Abstract & Study Questions → City Exploration Project Task: Demographic Profile	Sunday: ● Week 5 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project ● Mid-Term Survey
Week 6 Nov 3 – Nov 9 Inequity in Urban Spaces: Gender & Immigration	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ Cities & Society Ch. 8 (9 pages) ◆ Excerpts from Feminist City (14 pages) ◆ These charts show how migration is changing our cities (5 pages) → Week 6 Note-taking Activity due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: Edit & Submit Draft	Wednesday: Bring Identity Song to Class Sunday: ● Week 6 Note-taking Activity ● Week 6 Draft of City Exploration Project
Week 7 Nov 10 – Nov 16 Urban Politics & Power: Government Organization, & How Cities Work	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ The Skeleton of Power, Chapter 13 of <u>City Lights</u> (41 pages) ◆ Forms of Local Government from the National Leave of Cities (3 pages) ◆ Which US city is closest to a true regional government? (11 min) ◆ Who Really Designs Cities? (9 min 32 sec) → Week 7 Note-taking Activity due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: City Government & Organization	Wednesday: ● Note-taking Reflection Google Form Sunday: ● Week 7 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project

Class Schedule, page 4

Week/ Date Module/ Topic	Tasks (Materials are due on Wednesday & Sundays)	Deliverables
Week 8 Nov 17 – Nov 23 Challenges in Urban Spaces Today	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ Does my Neighborhood Determine my Future? (22 min) ◆ From Cities & Societies Ch. 11: Understanding Homelessness: From Global to Local by Jennifer Wolch & Michael Dear (18 pages) ◆ The Anti-Social Century ◆ Directions for the End of City Exploration Project → Week 8 Note-taking Activity due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: Topic of Your Choice	Sunday: ● Week 8 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project
Week 9 Nov 24 – Nov 30 Urban Economies: Work & Industry Thanksgiving Week	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ <i>City Lights</i> Ch. 18 (30 pages) - or maybe something else? ◆ Economic Schools of Thought (10 min) ◆ CitiesX Videos by Ed Glaeser – (7 min total) ◆ The Power of Place and Education – The Economics of Opportunity (8 min) ◆ Racial Segregation in the US – Poverty in Inner Cities (4 min 37 sec) ◆ This is the Thing that will Destroy Our Cities by CityNerd (17 min) → Week 9 Note-taking Activity due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: Business Leaders	Sunday: ● Week 9 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project ● Peer Feedback Google Activity
Week 10 Dec 1 – Dec 7 Global Cities & Future Urban Forms	→ Module Learning Objectives → Directions for the Weekly Note-taking Activity → Readings/ Videos/ Materials for the Week: ◆ What is a Global City? (3 pages) ◆ If You Shouldn't Call It The Third World, What Should You Call It? (2 pages) ◆ The 100 million city: is 21st century urbanization out of control? (5 pages) ◆ Ch. 11 Urbanization in the Developing World (excerpts) The New Urban Sociology by Gottdiener, Hutchison, and Ryan (21 pages) ◆ 9 charts that show US factory farming is even bigger than you realize → Week 10 Note-taking Activity due Sun. → City Exploration Project Task: Conclusion, Presentation, Edit & Submit	Wednesday: ● Present Projects to Peers in Class Sunday: ● Week 10 Note-taking Activity ● Make Progress on Your City Project ● End of Term Survey ● Turn in your Presentation Recording
Finals Week	Final Version of Your City Exploration Project – Due Wednesday, Dec 10 th before midnight.	

Resources, Policies, & Information

Student Resources

Includes a wide range of resources, including various centers for students with different identities– e.g. [Cultural Resource Center](#), [Disability Resource Center](#), [Queer Resource Center](#), [Students with Children Resource Center](#), [Women' s Resource Center](#), and [Veterans Resource Center](#); lots of academic resources like the Library, tutoring, and technical support (Office of Information Technology); and various counseling, financial, health and and wellness services– including some that are culturally specific.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities/ DRC

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, usable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, drc@pdx.edu.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.

Multicultural Student Services: Includes links to Multicultural Retention Services, Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) Initiative, the Native American Cultural Center, and more, including some duplications from the above and some additional resources.

University Career Center: Job Search Resources, Networking, Resume Help, Interviewing Practice, and workshops with employers.

PSU is a Sanctuary Campus: Please note, I will protect the confidentiality of students and will not voluntarily participate or facilitate immigration actions.

Basic Needs at Portland State

It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. Resource centers across campus are here to provide assistance, referrals, and support. Please contact anyone on this list for assistance:

- [Basic Needs Hub](#):
 - basicneedshub@pdx.edu
- [Portland State Food Pantry](#):
 - SMSU 325 pantry@pdx.edu
- [Emergency/ Hardship Fund](#) – emergency financial assistance
- [C.A.R.E. Team](#):
 - askdos@pdx.edu (503) 725-4422
- [Student Health and Counseling](#):
 - askshac@pdx.edu (503) 725-2800
- [Housing Service](#)

Resources, Policies, & Information, page 2

Discrimination, Violence, & Mandated Reporter/ Title IX Reporting Obligations

PSU is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to PSU's Title IX Coordinator, the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Dean of Student Life and cannot keep information confidential. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672 or by scheduling on-line (psuwrcreporting.com) or another confidential employee found on the sexual misconduct resource webpage. For more information about your obligations and resources for sex/gender discrimination and sexual violence (Title IX), please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your Canvas.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in Plagiarism. Cheating and or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment which may result in a failing grade for the course as well. For more information, please look at the PSU Student Code of Conduct (www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct)

Generative AI

The assignments in this course are designed to be completed **WITHOUT** the use of generative AI and in most cases, using generative AI will not give you the “correct” answer. Factually correct (or incorrect) AI answers will not substitute for reflective answers in this course and you will not receive a passing grade.

If you feel that generative AI is helpful to you, please be sure to clearly attribute what text was generated by the AI tool (e.g., AI-generated text appears in a different colored font, quoted directly in the text, or use an in-text parenthetical citation). It is important to note that if AI tools like chatGPT/ similar tools are permitted to be used for an assignment, then they should be used with caution and proper citation. **AI is not a replacement for your own thinking and research.** As this is fast changing, please review the [University's Policy](#).

Resources, Policies, & Information, page 3

Writing Resources

This course does require you to stretch yourself as a writer. Every writer needs to proof-read and revise their work to obtain the best finished product. If you need help with this process, PSU's Writing Center (www.writingcenter.pdx.edu) has a variety of free services. Please use this resource.

Free Speech Policies & Guidelines

Portland State University has [free speech policies and guidelines](#) for the classroom environment. I will use the PSU Conduct policy: disruptive behavior will be asked to leave and discriminatory or harassing behavior will be reported.

Recording (Audio or Video) Class sessions or Materials

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Except in cases of an approved accommodation from the Disability Resources Center, students who wish to record lectures or class activities for study purposes must inform the faculty member first. On any days when classes will be recorded, the instructor will notify all students in advance. Distribution of class recordings is prohibited without the written permission of the instructor and other students who are recorded is a violation of educational privacy law, known as FERPA as well as certain copyright laws.

Resources & Reporting - Diversity, Equity, & Belonging

The Toulan School and PSU strive to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes there are conflicts between students or between students and instructors. We want to hear your concerns and respond in a timely manner. Please see the [Conduct and Community Standards Reporting Page](#) and look at our larger [Resources](#).

[Portland State University Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) - addresses the definition of discrimination and harassment and provides appropriate contacts for reporting cases.

The Office of the Dean of Student Life houses the Academic Appeals process. Students who feel they have received a prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation may submit an [Academic Appeal Request](#). Before students submit this request, students must have appealed to the instructor, department chair and appropriate dean. Students should then read the [Academic Appeals Guidelines](#) to see if their grade dispute fits the purview of the Academic Appeal. For more information please visit the [Academic Appeals website](#), email askdos@pdx.edu, or call 503-725-4422.

Many of the sections of the syllabus were adapted from other professors and a variety of university sources.